

Remarks

Claims 22-24 are canceled.

Claim 1 is amended.

Claims 1, 2, 7-12, 17-19 and 25 are pending and are under consideration.

Claim 1 is amended to include the limitations of previously presented claim 22. Support is also found in the specification, page 6, second full paragraph.

No new matter is added.

Claims 1, 2, 7-12, 17-19 and 22-24 are rejected under 35 USC 103(a) as being unpatentable over Tsai, et al., U.S. Pat. No. 6,218,009 in view of Mor, et al., U.S. Pat. No. 6,146,757.

The rejections are as previously applied.

Applicants respectfully traverse these rejections.

The claims are now narrowed to where in the alkyl ethoxylate compounds of formula (la) x is 2 or 3 and R₁ is a straight or branched chain alkyl of 28, 30 or 32 carbon atoms. The compound of formula (lb) of the present working Examples meets these limitations.

The Tsai reference teaches core-sheath fibers with a polyolefin core and a wettable polyester blend sheath.

Tsai teaches a blend of a polyester and a wetting agent. The wetting agent of Tsai may be UNITHOX 480 or UNITHOX 750 ethoxylated alcohols (col. 11, lines 27-31).

Mor teaches wettable fiber or filaments having a thermoplastic polymer, a first wetting agent and a second wetting agent.

The second wetting agent of Mor may be an alkoxylated fatty alcohol.

The thermoplastic polymer of Mor is preferably an olefin polymer, more preferably polypropylene (paragraph bridging columns 5 and 6).

The Examiner states that it would have been obvious to use the polypropylene suggested by Mor as the sheath component rather than the polyester of the bicomponent fiber of Tsai (bottom page 4 of Action).

The Examiner states that Tsai teaches the present compounds of formula Ia (paragraph bridging pages 7 and 8 of Action).

Applicants respectfully submit that this second point is not correct.

Tsai discloses UNITHOX 480 or UNITHOX 750 as wetting agents. These wetting agents have an average linear hydrocarbon chain length between 26 and 50 carbon atoms. Tsai gives no guidance as to the number of repeating ethoxylate units. If one looks to UNITHOX 480 or UNITHOX 750 for guidance, the number of repeating ethoxylate units is between 17 and 42 (UNITHOX data sheet, of record). The number of repeat ethoxylate units in these compounds is outside the range of compounds of present formula Ia (2 or 3).

Further, Tsai teaches that the wetting agents have a particular HLB value: "Thus, wetting agents useful in the present invention exhibit HLB ratio values that are beneficially between about 10 to about 40, suitably between about 10 to about 20, and more suitable between about 12 to about 16" (col. 11, lines 6-9). UNITHOX 480 and UNITHOX 750 have HLB values of 16 and 10 respectively (UNITHOX data sheet).

The present compounds of formula Ia of the amended claims corresponds to UNITHOX 420 which has an HLB value of 4 (UNITHOX data sheet).

Thus, Tsai clearly teaches away from the present alkyl ethoxylates of formula Ia. Tsai does teach that the HLB value should not be too low or too high (col. 10, line 67-col. 11, line 6). However, Tsai clearly provides boundaries within which HLB values should fall. UNITHOX 480 and UNITHOX 750 fall within these HLB boundaries. UNITHOX 420, an alkyl ethoxylate of the present claims, does

not fall within these HLB boundaries. Thus, Tsai does not disclose the present compounds of formula Ia, and in fact teaches away from them.

Thus, the limitations of the present claims cannot be met as neither Mor nor Tsai teach the present compounds of formula Ia.

Those skilled in the art could not have arrived at the present specific ethoxylated alcohols from the disclosure of the cited references. Further, the outstanding results of the present working Examples could not have been expected from the combination of the cited disclosures.

The present working Examples on pages 26-29 display that the instant compounds of formula Ia provide polypropylene with excellent wettability, and that further the wettability is maintained after repeated insults, a measure of durability or permanence. Example 4 on page 30 demonstrates that polypropylene comprising a compound of formula Ia has potential in alkaline battery separator applications.

In view of the present amendments and remarks, Applicants submit that these rejections are addressed and are overcome.

Claim 25 is rejected under 35 USC 103(a) as being unpatentable over Tsai et al. in view of Mor and further in view of Gessner, et al., U.S. Pat. No. 5,733,822.

Applicants submit that these rejections are overcome as are the rejections over claims 1, 2, 7-12, 17-19 and 22-24.

Applicants submit that the present invention is an important teaching to the public that cannot be gleaned from the cited art.

Applicants aver that the present claim rejections are addressed and are overcome.

The Examiner is kindly requested to reconsider and to withdraw the present rejections.

Applicants submit that the present claims are in condition for allowance and respectfully request that they be found allowable.

Respectfully submitted,



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